



## Klamath Network Featured Creature

### June, 2008

### Spotted Fritillary (*Fritillaria atropurpurea*)

**General Description:** This perennial species from a tiny bulb is often small ranging from 1-6 dm (4-24 in) tall. Like all members of the Lily family (Liliaceae), it has one cotyledon at germination (making it a monocot). When fully developed, it lacks basal leaves and has 2-3 whorled leaves per node, often with less than 10 leaves total. The leaves are linear to lance-shaped and 4-12 cm (1.5-5 in) long. The flowers are nodding, mostly open, and have purplish brown tepals with yellow or white spotting. This species flowers from May-July. *F.*

*atropurpurea* is similar to *F. pinetorum*.

However, the flowers of *F. atropurpurea* are nodding to spreading while those of *F. pinetorum* are mostly erect.

**Ethnobotany:** The Lakota tribe called this plant *canhlógaŋ makātola* (which means blue earth weed). They used the whole plant as a cancer cure. The plants were pulverized into a salve and applied to scrofulous swellings.

The bulb can be cooked and eaten and is high in starch.



© Gary A. Monroe

Image from USDA PLANTS database



Picture by Sean B. Smith

*F. atropurpurea*



Drawing from Flora of North America

**Distribution:** *F. atropurpurea* has the widest geographic distribution in the genus. It ranges from California and Oregon in the west to North Dakota in the east and north and south to Arizona and New Mexico. This species can be found (if you look carefully) at 5 of the 6 Klamath Network units: Whiskeytown NRA, Lava Beds NM, Crater Lake NP, Lassen Volcanic NP, and Oregon Caves NM.



Map from Flora of North America

**Habitat:** This species can be found in humus, rich damp soils, or under trees and shrubs in valleys and open woods. It can also be found in mountains to near the timberline. The elevation range of *F. atropurpurea* is 1,000 – 3,200 m (3,280-10,500 ft).

**Threats:** As with many bulb producing plants, this species is at risk due to over zealous plant collectors. Fritillaries are beautiful plants but should be left to appreciate in nature, unless grown from seed by a reputable and eco-conscious nursery; then they make a nice edition to a shade garden, but don't over water.